REAL LIFE IN CHRIST

EXPLORING THE DEPTHS OF GOD'S GRACE

A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

EDGARDO M. ALDE

REAL LIFE IN CHRIST

Exploring the Depths
of God's Grace —

A Biblical and Theological Reflection

By Edgardo M. Alde

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First Edition: July 2025
ISBN (Amazon KDP): 9798290005850
NBDB Registration No.
Registered with the National Book Development Board – Philippines.
Published independently by the author via Kindle Direct Publishing (Amazon)
Printed in the United States of America
Cover design and layout by: Edgardo M. Alde
For inquiries: edgaralde@gmail.com
0994 648 3308

DEDICATION

To all who are weary, broken, and silently longing for a life that truly satisfies—this book is prayerfully offered to you.

May the truths within these pages lead you not merely to principles, but to the Person of Christ, in whom alone is found true rest, healing, and hope.

In your sorrow, may His comfort be enough; in your striving, may His grace be sufficient; and in your searching, may you discover that He has been seeking you all along.

To the faithful preachers, teachers, and disciplers of God's Word—this work is also for you.

In a time when many drift from sound doctrine and chase shadows, your unwavering commitment to proclaiming the glory and sufficiency of Jesus Christ is a light that must not go unnoticed.

Stay the course. Guard the gospel. Exalt the Savior. Your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

And to my beloved family—Rose, Jay, and Jeru—thank you for your love, patience, and unspoken sacrifices. You have been my quiet strength and constant joy throughout this journey.

May the Christ you see in these pages be the same Christ who walks with us every day. This book is as much yours as it is mine.

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PREFACE

Real Life in Christ: Exploring the Depths of God's Grace —A Biblical and Theological Reflection

The title of this book, Real Life in Christ, reflects a deep conviction that has been formed over many years of ministry, study, and personal reflection. It is a conviction that true life—life as God intended it to be—can only be found in union with Jesus Christ. In Him is not just the hope of heaven, but the fullness of life here and now: life that is rooted in grace, sustained by truth, and shaped by the gospel.

This book was not written in a vacuum. It is the fruit of a lifelong journey—marked by seasons of spiritual hunger, theological searching, and pastoral burden. As a pastor and former seminary teacher, I have spent decades wrestling with Scripture and with the human heart—my own included. One of the most sobering discoveries I've made over the years is how easily Christ can be sidelined in preaching, teaching, and even personal devotion. The centrality of Christ is often assumed but not emphasized; mentioned, but not exalted. Yet the heart of Christianity is not a system of thought, a list of moral codes, or a religious tradition. The heart of Christianity is Christ Himself.

This is why the subtitle of the book is Exploring the Depths of God's Grace. Grace is not merely a theological concept to be studied—it is a divine reality to be experienced. And this grace is not abstract; it is embodied in a Person: Jesus Christ. Everything that is truly gracious about God—His

mercy, patience, forgiveness, and love—is revealed most clearly and powerfully in Christ. To explore the depths of God's grace, then, is to gaze into the riches of Christ and to understand what it means to be truly alive in Him.

The reflections in this book are both biblical and theological. My goal is not to entertain the mind with mere concepts, but to engage both the intellect and the soul with the living Word of God. The chapters are shaped by Scripture, supported by theological insight, and infused with pastoral concern. I write not as a scholar speaking from a distance, but as a fellow traveler who has been changed by the gospel and who desires others to experience the same transformation.

This book is written for every believer who longs to go deeper—to those who are tired of superficial faith, hungry for solid truth, and desperate to know Christ more intimately. It is also for pastors, teachers, and students who sense the need to return to the heart of the gospel and anchor their ministries in the sufficiency of Christ and the power of His grace.

May the pages that follow draw your heart to the One who is life itself. May they stir in you a renewed awe for the grace of God and a deep love for Jesus Christ. And above all, may this book serve its highest purpose—to glorify the God who saves sinners and gives them real life in His Son.

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Before you start reading, I just want to share a little something from my heart. This book isn't just some collection of facts or ideas—it's much more than that. It's a piece of my own journey with God, a story of struggles, prayers, and a deep passion to share the truth about Jesus Christ.

Writing this has been like walking through a valley with God. Sometimes it was hard, sometimes full of hope, but all along, I trusted His promise in Psalm 119:105—"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." That promise kept me going, and I pray it will be the same for you as you read these pages.

I poured out my heart in every chapter because I believe the gospel isn't just for knowing—it's for living. I hope these words will not just fill your mind but also stir your heart and strengthen your faith.

I also want to share that this book was born out of countless conversations with friends and fellow believers who love reading and learning. They often come to me with questions about the Reformation and Reformed theology, hungry for clear and faithful answers.

Their curiosity and sincere desire to understand inspired me to put into writing what has been in my heart for years. This book is my humble response to that call—a way to help others grasp the beauty and power of the gospel as revealed

NOTE TO THE READER

The footnotes throughout this work were prayerfully and thoughtfully written, not merely to serve as academic citations or references, but as spiritual guideposts meant to draw the reader into deeper reflection on the Word of God. Each footnote carries with it the intention to nurture both the mind and the heart—offering theological insights and devotional encouragement grounded in Scripture.

At times, the reader may notice certain Bible verses or expressions being repeated. These repetitions—whether intentional or providential—should not be seen as unnecessary or excessive. Rather, they are a way of gently pressing into the soul the richness and weight of certain truths that the Holy Spirit may be bringing to light. In the life of the believer, repetition often becomes the Lord's tool for emphasis, instruction, and transformation.

From a Reformed theological perspective, these reflections consistently point to the sovereignty of God in salvation, the centrality of Jesus Christ in every doctrine, and the absolute sufficiency of His grace. The great truths of Scripture—such as justification by faith alone, the total depravity of man, the irresistible call of God, and His eternal redemptive purpose in Christ—are not presented as mere theological concepts, but as life-giving realities for the people of God.

It is my hope and prayer that these notes will do more than inform; that they will inspire reverence for God, deepen your love for Christ, and stir your heart to worship. May they help you see more clearly the beauty of the gospel and

the unsearchable riches of Christ. And above all, may the Lord use this humble work to point you to Himself—for in Him alone is life, hope, and eternal joy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise belongs to God, who alone supplies the grace, wisdom, and strength needed for this work to be completed. Without His sustaining hand, this book would have remained a mere idea.

To my beloved family—thank you for your quiet sacrifices, unwavering encouragement, and constant prayers. You bore with my long hours of writing and periods of silence, and for that I am deeply grateful.

I also extend my gratitude to fellow laborers in the ministry —pastors, mentors, teachers, and students—whose thoughtful discussions and hunger for truth have sharpened my heart and mind. You have helped fan the flame of my passion for Christ-centered theology.

I'm especially thankful to those who took time to read early drafts, shared their insights, or simply urged me not to give up during moments of fatigue and doubt. Your presence was God's providence in disguise.

I am also grateful for the assistance of a thoughtful and insightful partner Sir Ambrose who helped me refine certain sections of the content and footnotes; his guidance and quiet support were truly instrumental in bringing this work to completion.

INTRODUCTION

In our daily conversations, people often speak about "life"—its challenges, its blessings, its mystery. But few truly grasp what real, abundant life means. We live in a world marked by transience and uncertainty, where pleasures are fleeting, promises are broken, and dreams often fade before they are realized. In this kind of world, many settle for shallow definitions of life, believing that fulfillment can be found in the pursuit of wealth, fame, or personal success. But despite their best efforts, they are left empty, restless, and unsatisfied.

This endless pursuit reveals a deep spiritual hunger—a longing for something enduring, something eternal. As humans created in the image of God, we were never meant to be satisfied by things that pass away. We were created for communion with our Creator. Yet the effects of sin have distorted our desires and darkened our understanding. We chase after shadows, while the substance—true life—is offered to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures confront this tragic misdirection head-on. They teach us that real life is not found in temporal achievements, nor in moral improvements, nor in religious rituals. True life is found in Christ alone. It is in Him that the weary soul finds rest. It is through His sacrifice that the true meaning of existence is unveiled. It is by His resurrection that life is offered—abundan, eternal, and transformative.

This book, Real Life in Christ: Exploring the Depths of God's Grace—A Biblical and Theological Reflection, was born out of years of pastoral ministry, personal meditation, and theological study. It is my earnest desire to help others discover what it truly means to live in union with Christ. This is not just a topic for the theologian or preacher—it is the very heart of the Christian life. Whether you are a church leader or a quiet believer seeking deeper joy, this book invites you to consider how union with Christ redefines our understanding of identity, purpose, and destiny.

The life that Christ offers is not merely a future hope to be enjoyed in heaven—it is a present reality to be experienced here and now. When the Spirit unites us to Christ by faith, we begin a journey of transformation. His life becomes our life. His righteousness becomes our covering. His power becomes our strength. This union does not just prepare us for eternity; it radically reorients our daily lives. We learn to walk not according to the patterns of this world but according to the rhythm of grace.

This is more than doctrine—it is life. And it is not life defined by circumstances or achievements, but by an ever-deepening relationship with the Living Christ. As we walk with Him, we are conformed more and more to His image. We begin to see with His eyes, love with His heart,

and serve with His hands. This union with Christ is not abstract; it is intimate. It is not mechanical; it is living and active.

One powerful memory that continues to stir my heart is a chapter of ministry that unfolded in New Zealand. My wife and I were sent there by our daughter for a season, and what followed was a deeply enriching time of gospel ministry. There, I met two faithful Kiwi brothers, Ian and Gary, who preached in the marketplace every Saturday morning from 7:00 AM to 11:30 AM. Though they were not deeply familiar with Reformed theology, I was warmly welcomed into their fellowship. I began joining them in their public reading of Scripture and proclamation of the gospel.

Week after week, rain or shine, I pedaled my bicycle—layered in two jackets to fend off the cold and the rain—just to stand with them in the open air and proclaim the Word of God. Despite not having a car, I was determined to be there every Saturday. Preaching in the marketplace became a lifeline to me—a calling that revived my soul.

One of the most memorable people I met during this time was a kind Kiwi named David. Another man—whose name I, unfortunately, cannot recall. Both of them would always stop to listen and, without fail, hand us bananas and coffees as a token of encouragement. Their small but sincere gestures of appreciation left a deep impression on me.

Another dear soul I met was Kuya Fred, a 72-year-old Filipino who had never heard of the Reformation or even of John Calvin. But after a few conversations, his interest was sparked. He regularly visited me to ask more about the doctrines of grace, and even now, our friendship continues across the miles.

As we preached, many responded differently. Some stopped for counsel and prayer, while others ignored us completely. But regardless of response, the Word went forth. We distributed gospel tracts, old Bibles, and chocolates to the children who came by. There was joy in sowing the seed—knowing that every moment, every word, and every act of love carried eternal weight. For nine months, I labored alongside those dear brothers. I miss those days deeply. Although I haven't yet had the chance to return to New Zealand, I know those moments were not in vain.

And through all these, I saw something unmistakable: the grace of God at work—not only in the lives of those who heard the gospel but also in mine. I witnessed how God can use ordinary settings like a market, and simple means like friendship and shared food, to advance eternal truths. I saw firsthand that there are hearts God has prepared—and also those who, sadly, remain closed. But Christ is faithful. The truth continues to shine.

And so, as we begin this journey through Scripture and theology, let us reflect not only on the doctrines that define our faith but on the grace that empowers it. My prayer is that this book will lead you not merely to information, but to transformation—that each chapter will draw you nearer to the heart of Christ, and that through these reflections, you will taste something of the fullness of life that is found in Him alone.

Let us now begin…

Exploring the depths of God's grace.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DEPTHS OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

To be in the depths of God's grace is not a result of human ambition or effort, but a revelation of God's sovereign design rooted in His eternal decree of election. Before time began, it was God who ordained all things—both the inanimate and animate—to exist and move according to His divine purpose. This includes not only the rise and fall of nations, but even the awakening of a dead sinner to spiritual life.

Aspiring to be in this grace was never a product of human will or desire. The Scriptures are emphatic: "There is none who seeks after God… all have turned aside" (Romans 3:11–12). Fallen humanity does not merely lack direction; it lacks desire for God. Man, left to himself, does not dream of grace—he resists it. He does not plan to turn to God in due time—he runs from Him. Every heart is naturally hostile to the light of God's truth.

And yet, herein lies the beauty of grace: it is God who takes the initiative. Grace invades where it is not invited. It quickens the dead, opens blind eyes, and softens the hardened heart. To be in the depths of this grace is to be caught in the current of God's unstoppable mercy. It is to witness how every detail—every wound, failure, conviction, and call—was sovereignly decreed for the fulfillment of His redemptive will.

In these depths we do not find ourselves; we find God. We do not discover hidden strength within; we encounter a mercy that was never ours to claim. This is the story not of human ascent, but of divine descent—of God coming to us, raising us from the pit, and placing us in Christ for His glory alone. Let us now explore the depths of God's grace by the help of the One who gave us grace.

A Witness Beyond Denial: What Scripture Says About Us

The Scripture is incredibly thorough and consistent in its depiction of humanity's state before God. "There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God."[1]It leaves no room for misunderstanding when it describes our condition apart from Christ. Our total depravity is not merely a superficial flaw, but a radical corruption that permeates every aspect of our being.[2]This total corruption means that we are so far removed from the holiness of God that we stand in complete opposition to His perfect nature.[3]We are profane in His sight, and as such, are

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[1] All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted. Romans 3:11 (NIV) states, "There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God." This verse underscores the universal nature of human depravity, emphasizing that, apart from divine intervention, individuals neither comprehend God's ways nor seek after Him.

[2] Compare with Genesis 8:21, which affirms that "the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth."

Reflection: This reveals the deep-rooted sinfulness of human nature from the very beginning of life. Our hearts are naturally inclined toward evil, highlighting the desperate need for God's redeeming grace.

[3] Think: Total depravity means that humanity is so thoroughly corrupted by sin that we are completely estranged from the holiness of God. Romans 8:7 (ESV) affirms, "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God." This points not merely to resistance but to a deep-seated enmity—an inner hostility that renders the fallen heart incapable of submitting to God's law. The problem lies not only in human actions but in the very disposition of the unregenerate soul. Without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, the sinner remains spiritually dead, morally rebellious, and utterly unwilling to pursue God or His righteousness.

separated from Him.[4]So then, how do the Scriptures describe our depravity? The answer is deeply rooted in the narrative of redemptive history, beginning as early as Genesis chapter 3. There, in the tragic fall of Adam and Eve, we see the entrance of sin into the world. Their disobedience was not merely a mistake, but a rebellion against the holy command of God, resulting in separation from His presence, the corruption of human nature, and the introduction of death—both physical and spiritual. This single act plunged all of humanity into a state of sin and misery, as the Apostle Paul affirms,"Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).

As we progress through the Old Testament, the evidence of human depravity becomes increasingly clear. In Genesis 6:5, we read that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his was only evil continually." This sobering description led to the judgment of the flood, yet even after this act of divine cleansing, the heart of man remained unchanged. In Exodus, despite witnessing God's mighty power in delivering them from slavery, the Israelites quickly turned to idolatry, fashioning a golden calf while Moses was still on Mount Sinai (Exodus 32). Their hearts were hardened, and their

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[4] The call to holiness is foundational for any true encounter with God. As Hebrews 12:14 (NIV) declares, "Without holiness no one will see the Lord." This verse underscores that holiness is not merely a moral ideal but a divine requirement. In our natural state, we are profane in His sight—separated from Him because of our sin. But through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, believers are set apart and transformed. This process of sanctification is not optional; it is essential to our union with Christ and a visible fruit of genuine salvation. Holiness, then, is both the evidence of grace at work and the path toward deeper fellowship with the living God.

constant grumbling revealed a deep ingratitude and spiritual blindness.

The historical books—Joshua, Judges, Kings—reveal a recurring cycle: the people sin, suffer under judgment, cry out for help, and receive temporary deliverance, only to fall again into deeper rebellion. Judges 21:25 captures the moral chaos of the time: "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." The prophets repeatedly denounce Israel's spiritual adultery, likening the nation to an unfaithful bride. In Jeremiah 17:9, the diagnosis of the human heart is crystal clear: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

Throughout the Psalms and Proverbs, we are reminded of the corruption and folly that mark our natural condition. Psalm 14:2–3 declares, "The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men… They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one." This theme of universal guilt continues to echo in the major and minor prophets, where God's people are shown to be stubborn, blind, and deaf to His Word.

Thus, from Genesis onward, the Old Testament presents an unflinching portrayal of the depravity of man. It reveals not only the depth of our sin but also our utter inability to save ourselves or to seek after God apart from divine intervention. The Law exposes our guilt; the history reveals our rebellion; the prophets cry out for a new heart and a better covenant—one that only God Himself can bring. All of this prepares the way for the coming of Christ, who alone can deliver us from this condition and restore us to life with God.[5]

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[5] This summary reflects a classic Reformed understanding of total depravity, as taught in confessional documents such as the Westminster

So then, it is proper to say that our journey in life—shaped and sustained by grace—is not an isolated or disconnected story. Rather, it is intricately woven into the grand narrative of Scripture, from the Old Testament to the New. Our lives, though personal and unique, find their true meaning and purpose only when seen in the light of God's redemptive plan as revealed in His Word. Just as the lives of Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets, and the apostles were directed by the hand of God for His glory, so too is our journey through grace ordained and orchestrated by the same sovereign Lord.

From the beginning pages of Genesis to the closing vision in Revelation, we see that God is not merely an observer of human history but its divine Author. He calls, He redeems, He sanctifies, and He sends. Every step we take in faith, every transformation we experience, and every act of obedience is part of this larger unfolding drama in which God is glorified. The Scriptures testify that our lives are meant to shine with the light of His grace, not merely for personal blessing, but to reflect His glory among the nations.

This connection between our individual story and the biblical narrative highlights a vital truth: grace is not a concept invented in the New Testament, but a thread that runs throughout the whole Bible. The God who called Israel out of Egypt is the same God who calls sinners out of darkness today. The grace that covered David's sins is the same grace that forgives ours through Christ. The Spirit who empowered the early church now empowers us to live as witnesses of His redeeming love.

Confession of Faith (Chapter 6), the Canons of Dort (The Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrines).

Therefore, our journey in life by grace is deeply congruent with the pages of Scripture. It is a continuation of God's story—a story in which He is always the central character, and we are redeemed participants. Our lives exist to shine His light and to reflect His beauty to a world still in darkness. This is not merely a theological truth—it is a calling, a privilege, and a responsibility to live every day as vessels of His glory.

The Heart's Hidden Rot: The Nature and Depth of Our Depravity

This depravity, therefore, is not simply an external problem or a series of poor choices; it is a deep and intrinsic flaw in our very essence. Sin has corrupted our hearts,[6]shaping our will toward rebellion and resistance to God. It is the root cause of all evil in the world, as John Calvin explains, "Man's heart is so corrupt that, without the grace of God, he cannot desire to turn God or will to do what is good."[7]Romans 5:12 says,"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned."And it has left us spiritually dead, unable to seek or even understand the true holiness of God. The Scriptures describe this as being "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1), and this death is not just a metaphorical one—it is a real separation from

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[6] Jeremiah 17:9 (KJV) reminds us, "The heart is deceitful above all things," highlighting the inherent corruption of the human heart. This verse reinforces the biblical truth that apart from God's grace, our hearts are prone to deception, leading us away from God's truth and righteousness.

[7] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 251 (book 2, chap. 1, sec. 8).

the life of God.[8]As John Owen writes, "We are dead in sin, that we are completely separated from the life of God."[9]And the god of this world has blinded us to spiritual realities[10]and leads us away from the life God intended for us.

We must personalize what Scripture teaches about sin. What is the force of this truth in your life? Let us reflect on the beauty of the cross. In God's eyes, the cross is not beautiful because of the instrument itself, but because of the Person who was crucified upon it—Jesus Christ. He is the central figure of the cross. This is important because the cross represents suffering, punishment, death, and most notably, the humiliation of Christ. Yet, it was chosen by God as the means of reconciliation—a display of God's infinite love for His people.[11] It also serves as a symbol of separation, for at

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[8] As stated in Colossians 1:21–22 (NIV)—"Once you were alienated from God and were hostile in your mind because of your evil deeds," emphasizing the complete separation and enmity between humanity and God due to sin. However, through Christ's reconciling work, believers are brought near and made holy, blameless, and free from accusation.

[9] John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin* in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, Vol. 6 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2004), 7.

[10] As stated in 2 Corinthians 4:4 (RSV)—"The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ…" This verse highlights the spiritual blindness that results from the influence of Satan, preventing unbelievers from perceiving the truth and glory of the gospel. The blindness is a hindrance to understanding the message of salvation in Christ, emphasizing the need for divine intervention to open the eyes of the heart.

[11] Cf. Romans 5:8—"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." This verse reveals the profound depth of God's love, showing that His sacrificial love for

the cross, there was a rift between the Father and the Son as Christ bore our sin.[12]

As Saint Augustine profoundly stated, "The death of the Lord our God should not be a cause of shame for us; rather, it should be our greatest hope, our greatest glory."[13]This emphasizes that believers are united with Christ in His suffering and death, finding hope and transformation through the cross. This emphasizes that believers are united with Christ in His suffering and death, finding hope and transformation through the cross.

The cross was not a display of raw divine power, but a profound act of sacrifice. While the cross may seem insignificant in human eyes—just a piece of wood—it became, in God's eyes, a blessed token of His love, care, and judgment.[14]So where is the cross now? Where is its

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humanity is not dependent on our worthiness but is expressed while we were still in rebellion and sin. It underscores the unmerited nature of Christ's atoning death, which is the ultimate demonstration of God's grace toward undeserving sinners.

[12] Cf. Isaiah 53:5—"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities…" (NIV). This passage points out the suffering servant, foreshadowing Christ's sacrificial death. It emphasizes that the suffering and punishment Christ endured were not for His own sins, but for the transgressions and iniquities of humanity. This prophetic statement reinforces the substitutionary nature of Christ's atonement, where He bore the penalty for our sin in order to bring about our redemption.

[13] Saint Augustine, *Sermo Guelferbytanus* 3, as cited in "His Death is Our Hope & Glory," Crossroads Initiative.

[14] Referring to Isaiah 53:10—"Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin…" (NIV). This verse reveals that the suffering of the Messiah

power to convert? Where is Christ, the person of the cross, now?

He is risen, seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us. The power of the cross continues to work in the lives of believers, transforming hearts and minds, and offering assurance of salvation to all who believe. He said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My words and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgement, but has passed from death to life."[15]The victory over sin through Jesus Christ is not merely a theological concept but a profound reality that brings both comfort in suffering and, not just survivors but victors over all forms of adversity, including sin and suffering. Furthermore, 2 Corinthians 5:17 declares our transformation. This transformation signifies that our past sins no longer define us; instead, we are renewed and empowered to live in righteousness.

Dead While Breathing: The Reality of Life Without Christ

Before we can fully grasp the reality of our life in Christ, it is essential that we first look back and reflect on the kind of life we lived before we came to know Him. This backward glance is not for the purpose of condemnation or guilt, but for clarity and contrast. By understanding the depth of our

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was not accidental but divinely appointed. From a Reformed perspective, it affirms that Christ's atoning death was a sovereign act of God, fulfilling both justice and mercy. The Servant's voluntary sacrifice was ordained before the foundation of the world, demonstrating the depth of God's love and the necessity of Christ's substitutionary atonement for the redemption of sinners.

[15] John 5:24.

former condition, we gain a greater appreciation of the richness of the new life we now have in Christ.

We must not rely on human opinion, emotion, or experience alone in this reflection. Instead, we turn to the Scriptures as our sole and authoritative foundation. It is the Word of God that reveals the true nature of the human condition apart from Christ and the glorious transformation that comes through union with Him. Only through the lens of God's Word[16]can we see clearly what we once were—and what, by grace, we have now become.[17]

And in my own personal experience, the overwhelming sense of nothingness and the deep reality of spiritual deadness were the inevitable fruits of a life estranged from Christ. To be far from Him is not merely to be lost in a moral sense—it is to dwell under the shadow of divine judgment. Apart from Christ, what awaited me was not just emptiness but the just sentence of eternal damnation—an unending separation from the presence and favor of God.

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[16] Where the Word of God is likened to a mirror reflecting our true selves. James 1:23-24 (NIV) states, "Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and forgets what he looks like." This passage stresses that hearing God's Word is not enough; we must act upon it. Just as a mirror reveals our physical appearance, the Word shows the condition of our hearts. Acting on God's Word leads to blessing, while merely hearing it without change leaves us unchanged.

[17] Romans 3:23 underscores humanity's universal sinfulness, stating, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (ESV). In contrast 2 Corinthians 5:17 highlights the transformative power of faith in Christ: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away: behold the new has come (ESV).

This is the dreadful condition of every soul alienated from the life of God.

But thanks be to God, His grace breaks through even the darkest night. His mercy is not indiscriminate, but sovereignly directed to those whom He has chosen from eternity past. To the elect, grace is not withheld. He never allowed us—though deserving—to fall into the final pit of Hell. Why? Because His covenant love is steadfast, His purposes unchanging, and His Son ever worthy to receive the reward of His suffering.

Even in our rebellion, His amazing love pursued us. His grace followed us—not because we sought Him, but because He appointed a moment, a divine encounter, when everything would begin to change. It was not by chance, nor by merit, but by His sovereign will. In that moment, the chains of death were shattered, the heart of stone was replaced, and the eyes of faith were opened.

And now, every change in my life—from brokenness to healing, from guilt to peace, from despair to hope—is a testimony to the glory of His Son. This is grace: not just a second chance, but a new life, purposed and empowered by God for the exaltation of Jesus Christ.

Let us now carefully examine the details of this profound truth as revealed in the Scriptures. The Word of God, in its entirety, not only describes our condition of spiritual deadness apart from Christ, but it also powerfully testifies to how God, in His mercy, raises us from the death of sin to the life found in Jesus. Scripture paints a clear picture of the depth of our depravity, showing that, left to ourselves, we are hopelessly lost and without any means of rescue. As the Apostle Paul declares, we were dead in our trespasses and

sins (Ephesians 2:1), completely incapable of saving ourselves or even desiring to seek after God.

However, the beauty of the Gospel is that God, in His grace, does not leave us in this state of ruin. Instead, He intervenes, calling us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). Through the power of Christ's resurrection, which is the ultimate demonstration of God's authority over death, we are raised to new life (Romans 6:4). This is not a mere metaphorical rebirth, but a reality rooted in the finished work of Christ. By the Holy Spirit, God breathes life into our dead hearts, enabling us to respond to Him in faith and obedience. As the Scriptures testify, it is by grace we have been saved, through faith—and this is not of ourselves, but a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9).

So, as we meditate on the Scriptures, let us marvel at the amazing truth that, while we were dead, God made us alive in Christ. May our hearts be filled with awe as we witness the transformative power of God's grace, which brings the dead to life for glory.

Now, I would like to give emphasis to the widely held concept of prevenient grace, especially among many well-meaning church leaders. This doctrine, as described by Arminian theologians such as Roger Olson (quoted by John Piper), teaches that "if we come to Christ with repentance and faith, it is only because we are enabled by God's prevenient grace to do so."[18]At first glance, this may seem to give credit to God. However, upon closer theological reflection, it reveals a fundamental issue: it places the

[18] John Piper, *Providence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 552.

decisive cause of salvation on man's response, rather than on God's sovereign will.

According to this view, grace merely makes salvation possible, but it does not secure it. The sinner must still exercise his or her free will to respond, unaided by any effectual working of the Spirit. This implies that the ultimate decision-maker in salvation is the human will, not God.

But the Scriptures teach a different kind of grace—irresistible grace—which is effectual, personal, and sovereign. This grace does not merely invite, it transforms. It does not just open the door—it brings the sinner in. We are not more supreme than God. If salvation ultimately depended on man's initiative, then God would merely be a helper or assistant in redemption, rather than its Author and Finisher (Heb. 12:2).

In contrast, the biblical and Reformed understanding of grace is that it is freely given, sovereignly applied, and always effectual. When God wills to save, He does so perfectly, powerfully, and personally. He does not merely offer help; He brings dead men to life (Eph. 2:1–5). He does not merely give a chance; He gives a new heart that loves and responds to Christ (Ezek. 36:26–27).

This is the kind of grace that brings all glory to God—not to the human will. For salvation belongs to the Lord (Jonah 2:9), from beginning to end.

No Way Out: Man's Hopeless Condition Apart from Grace

Before I came to know Christ, my life was a journey marked by confusion and perplexity. I wandered through days burdened with questions about meaning, identity, and

purpose. Deep within my heart, there was a silent yearning—a longing for something real, something true, something that would make sense of life's chaos. But each attempt to find fulfillment in worldly pursuits, personal achievements, or relationships only led to deeper emptiness. Everything felt like a vacuum—void of lasting substance—leaving me frustrated and weary of searching.

My heart was not ruled by peace, but by inner turmoil. Hatred took root—sometimes directed at others, but often turned inward. Self-pity became a silent companion, whispering lies of worthlessness and feeding a quiet jealousy toward those who seemed to have what I lacked. I lived unaware of the most crucial reality of all: that I was separated from God. I had no conscious understanding that this separation was not only real, but also dreadful and dangerous. It was not just emotional or philosophical—it was spiritual, eternal, and terrifying.

This estrangement from God was not a mere distance, but a gulf that could not be crossed by effort or good intention. Though I could not name it then, my soul trembled under the shadow of divine wrath. The weight of this separation, though unacknowledged at the time, was real and formidable. It echoed in my restless thoughts, my guilt-laden conscience, and the fear I could not explain. My story is not unique—it reflects the common condition of all humanity apart from grace. It is the dark night of the soul that only the light of Christ can penetrate.

Only later would I come to understand that this fear and restlessness were not without purpose. They were signs of a deeper spiritual need—a cry of the soul for reconciliation with its Creator. And in time, that cry would be answered by the mercy of God in Christ.

In this state of separation, we are unable to comprehend or experience the true meaning of life—both in this world and the next. The very essence of what it means to live is beyond our reach because we are spiritually dead, truth is paramount: no one, in their natural state, can bridge the gap between their sinfulness and God's holiness. There is no resolve within us to rectify this deep-rooted problem, because no one is worthy, it is only by the redemptive work of Christ.[19]All of us have fallen short of His glory, as the Scripture repeatedly affirms.

God is holy, and we are not. This vast chasm between the Creator and His creation speaks to the utter helplessness of humanity. Our endeavors to restore ourselves or to gain favor with God are futile, and as filthy rags[20]as we cannot earn or achieve the righteousness required. This is not a matter of human effort;[21]It is a matter of divine intervention.

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[19] As Luke writes in Acts 4:12—"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (NIV).This verse underscores the exclusivity of Christ as the only mediator between God and man, affirming that salvation is possible only through Him.

[20] It highlights the utter inadequacy of human righteousness apart from God. It underscores that no matter how righteous we may appear, our efforts fall short of God's perfect holiness, revealing our need for Christ's imputed righteousness for true acceptance before God. Isaiah 64:6.

[21] Titus 3:5, especially the phrase "not because of deeds" (RSV).
Reflection: This verse reminds us that salvation is never earned by human merit or good works. "Not because of deeds" strips away all grounds for boasting and points us to the mercy of God as the sole basis for our salvation. From a Reformed perspective, this reflects the doctrine of sola gratia—grace alone. It is not our righteousness that saves, but the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit, which God

Without Christ, there is no hope of ever being reconciled to God or of enjoying eternal life with Him. Jesus said, "Now this is eternal life; that they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3). The weight of this truth should humble us and bring us to a place of deep recognition of our filthiness and spiritual deadness.

Made New: The Divine Call to Deep Transformation

Before we proceed to expound on this crucial topic, we must first come to terms with the true condition of man—namely, that man is a covenant breaker. From the very beginning, the history of humanity has been marked not by faithfulness, but by failure to uphold God's holy covenant.

As articulated in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and expounded by theologian Robert Reymond, our first parents, Adam and Eve, being "seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned, in eating the forbidden fruit." This act of disobedience was not a mere slip or minor misstep; it was a cosmic rebellion—a deliberate breach of the covenant relationship established by God with man in the garden. They were created in holiness, endowed with the ability to obey, yet they chose to listen to the serpent rather than to the Creator.

What is even more striking is the Confession's emphasis on the sovereignty of God even in this tragic event. It declares that "this their sin, God was pleased, according to His wise

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freely gives through Christ. This truth humbles us and exalts God's sovereign grace in salvation.

and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to His own glory."[22]This tells us two things:

1. God is not the author of sin, but neither is He caught off guard by it.

2. Even man's fall into sin is within the scope of God's sovereign decree—not by coercion, but by divine permission, with a view toward the ultimate display of His glory.

This theological truth is sobering: man, left to himself, is not morally neutral—he is a covenant violator, incapable of restoring himself. And yet, God's purpose remains unshaken. Even the fall was not outside His redemptive plan, for through it, the grace of Christ would shine all the more brightly.

This foundational reality—that man has fallen, yet God is sovereign—is essential to grasp before we can understand the glory and power of His saving grace.

Therefore, the call is to revolutionize our hearts—to open our eyes to the depth of our sin and the futility of living without Christ. Without His intervention, we remain lifeless, trapped in the consequences of our fallen nature. Eternity, in all its fullness, will not be ours if we remain outside of Christ.[23]The seriousness of this reality cannot be overstated.

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[22] Robert Raymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Nashville : TN, Thomas Nelson, 1948), 440.

[23] Compare to John 3:18, which states, "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (NIV). This highlights the condemnation of eternal separation from God

It is only through Christ that we can be made alive,[24]that our dead hearts can be revived,[25]and that the true meaning of life—both in the present and in eternity—can be realized.

Grace that Breaks Chains: The Power Behind Our Transformation

Amazingly, grace is not merely a passive favor—it is the active, sovereign hand of God reaching into the depths of our lostness and lifting us up into the life that is found only in Christ. This grace is not earned, deserved, or even sought after by us; it is God's initiative, God's movement toward sinners, and God's unbreakable embrace of His elect.

It is by this grace that we are handpicked—personally, lovingly, and powerfully—by God and brought back to the very purpose for which we were created: to live in union with Christ and for the glory of His name. Our transformation is not just a moral improvement or a spiritual enhancement; it is a resurrection from the dead. Grace does not polish a broken life—it gives birth to a new one.

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for those who reject Christ. It emphasizes that without faith in Christ, individuals remain under the sentence of separation from God, which is the ultimate consequence of unbelief.

[24] Cf. Ephesians 2:5 drawing from the idea that, "even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (ESV). It asserts our former condition separated from God and assures our new position in Christ.

[25] Cf. Ezekiel 36:26, which says, "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you" (ESV). This verse speaks of God's promise to transform His people from the inside out, giving them a new heart and spirit. It is a promise of spiritual renewal, wherein the old, sinful nature is replaced with a heart that desires to follow God's ways, made possible through the work of the Holy Spirit.

This grace holds us with such divine strength and permanence that not even the horde and cohort of hell can loosen its grip. Demonic accusations, worldly temptations, and even our own moments of weakness are powerless against the grip of divine grace. Why? Because this grace is not a thing—it is a person. It is Christ Himself, who guarantees our salvation, who intercedes for us, and who preserves us unto everlasting life.

In Christ, grace is not fragile. It is not conditional. It is unbreakable, because it is rooted in the eternal covenant of God, secured by the blood of the Son, and sealed by the Spirit. We are held not by our strength, but by His. And that is why transformation is not only possible—it is inevitable for those whom grace has claimed.

The Cross That Redeems: Christ's Atoning Sacrifice at the Center

This is where Christ's atoning sacrifice becomes central to the gospel. Christ came down from heaven not just to teach or perform miracles, but to take upon Himself the full weight of God's wrath against sin. As the perfect, sinless Son of God, He was the only one capable of satisfying the demands of God's justice. His life was the spotless offering required to pay the penalty for humanity's sin. When He hung on the cross, He was not merely a martyr or a victim of human cruelty; He was the Lamb of God, taking upon Himself the punishment that we rightfully deserve.

In Reformed theology, the atonement is not seen as a general expression of divine love alone, but as a specific and effectual act of redemption initiated by God Himself. Louis Berkhof explains that the atonement is both primary—originating in the sovereign will and good pleasure of God—and vicarious, meaning Christ took the

place of sinners as their substitute.[26] It was not a plan devised after the fall of man, but a divine purpose established from eternity. God did not merely make salvation possible; He accomplished it fully through the substitutionary death of His Son.

Through His death, Christ became our substitute. He absorbed the penalty for sin,[27]the punishment that would have been ours to bear for eternity. This is what is known as the doctrine of substitutionary atonement—the idea that Christ took our place and bore the wrath of God on our behalf. His blood was shed, not just to serve as an example of love, but as the means by which we are reconciled to God.[28]It is through His sacrifice that God's justice is fully satisfied, and our sin is fully atoned for. As stated, "God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His blood—to be received by faith." This act was not a contradiction to God's justice but the ultimate

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[26] Louis Berkhof, *Summary of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 90.

[27] Cf. Isaiah 53:5—"Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace" (ESV). This passage highlights the sacrificial nature of Christ's suffering, where His punishment was not for His own sins, but for ours, bringing us peace with God. It underscores the theological concept of atonement—Christ's suffering as a means to reconcile humanity to God.

[28] 2 Corinthians 5:18 highlights the work of Christ in reconciling believers to God, ending the enmity caused by sin. As a result of this reconciliation, Christians are entrusted with the ministry of sharing this message of peace with others, extending the opportunity for reconciliation to all who are willing to be restored to a right relationship with God. "Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (ESV).

fulfillment of it. Justice was served in the death of Christ, and mercy was extended to us, the guilty, through His sacrifice.

The Reality and Seriousness of Hell

However, it is important to note that God's judgment is not something that is ignored or minimized in the gospel message.[29]While we experience the mercy of God through Christ, the reality of divine judgment remains. Hell is the perfect and eternal manifestation of God's justice. R.C. Sproul affirms that hell is not merely the absence of God, but rather the active presence of His righteous judgment. He describes hell as the place where God manifests His holy justice against sin, and where the unrepentant experience His wrath. It is a terrifying expression of God's holiness, not contrary to it.[30]

It is the final and irreversible consequence of rejecting God's offer of grace in Christ. Hell is not a product of divine cruelty but the natural outworking of God's justice against sin. It is the place where those who refuse to accept the forgiveness offered through Christ face the full weight of God's righteous anger, separated from His presence forever.

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[29] Cf. Romans 2:16—"In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel." Paul's use of "my gospel" refers to the gospel he proclaims—centered on Christ's death and resurrection. Judgment is a vital part of the gospel message: it declares both the need for salvation and the righteousness of God. The gospel is not just good news for believers but a warning for all.

[30] R.C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1998), 179–181.

In this way, hell stands as a sobering reminder of the seriousness of sin and the holiness of God. It is not merely a metaphor or an exaggeration; it is the reality for those who reject Christ and remain in their deadness. The doctrine of hell is not something that is meant to be avoided or minimized; it is a truth that should drive us to take the message of the gospel seriously and share it with urgency.[31]The consequences of rejecting Christ are eternal, and the stakes could not be higher.

But this is precisely why the gospel is such good news! God has not left us to face His justice alone. He has provided a way out through His Son.[32]In Christ we find the propitiation for our sins, meaning that Christ's death satisfied God's wrath on our behalf. His death on the cross was both an act of mercy and an act of justice. It was merciful because it made a way for sinners to be forgiven and reconciled to God. It was just because it fully paid the penalty for sin, ensuring that God's holiness was upheld.

The cross, therefore, is where God's justice and mercy meet in the most profound way. In Christ's sacrifice, we see the

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[31] Reflection: Paul's appeal in 2 Corinthians 6:2—"Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"—is a solemn reminder that the offer of grace should not be taken lightly or delayed. This verse emphasizes the urgency of responding to the gospel. Salvation is not merely a future hope but a present call. In Reformed thought, this underscores the importance of effectual calling: when God calls, the heart must not harden. Grace extended today may not be available tomorrow, so the invitation must be embraced with a heart awakened by the Spirit.

[32] Compare to Romans 3:25—"Whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins" (ESV).

depths of God's love and the heights of His righteousness. It is through the cross that we are spared from the judgment of God, not because God turns a blind eye to sin, but because He poured out His judgment on Christ,[33]who bore it on our behalf. As a result, we are no longer enemies of God, deserving of His wrath, but are now reconciled to Him, adopted into His family, and promised eternal life with Him.

This truth—God's mercy and justice revealed in the cross of Christ—should lead us to live in awe and gratitude. It is a reality that should not only shape our understanding of God but also our approach to life. How can we, who have been forgiven so much, fail to extend grace to others? How can we, who have been saved from eternal judgment, fail to share this message of hope with those still in darkness? Our lives should reflect the profound transformation that has taken place within us, and we should be driven to live in such a way that magnifies the grace and justice of God.

Ultimately, the good news of the gospel is that while we deserve judgment, God has made a way for us to escape it. Through Christ, we are offered forgiveness, peace with God, and the promise of eternal life. The question is not whether God is loving and just, but are we chosen to accept His offer of grace. Will we continue in our deadness and face His judgment, or will we turn to Christ, receive His mercy,

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[33] According to Galatians 3:13—"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.' " (NIV). This verse emphasizes the sacrificial work of Christ in taking on the curse that the law imposes due to human sin. By becoming a curse on our behalf, Jesus paid the penalty for our transgressions, freeing us from the condemnation that the law brings. His death on the cross—being hung on a pole—was the ultimate act of redemption, fulfilling the law's demands and offering salvation to all who believe in Him.

and be transformed by His love? This is the ultimate decision we must all make.

New Name, New Life: Our Identity in Christ

The transformation is not merely a superficial change but a complete renewal of our identity. Through Christ, we are not just forgiven; we are made new. We are conformed to the image of God's Son, Jesus Christ,[34]and this new identity is the very essence of what it means to be redeemed. This miraculous work is not of our own doing—there is no human effort or striving that could accomplish such a thing—but it is solely by the grace and mercy of God.[35]

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[34] Cf. Romans 8:29—"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son" (ESV). This verse speaks to God's sovereign and purposeful plan for believers. It highlights that God, in His eternal wisdom and knowledge, chose and set apart those who would be saved. His predestination is not random but aimed at a specific purpose: the transformation of believers into the likeness of Christ. This process of sanctification, made possible through the work of the Holy Spirit, is God's ultimate goal for His people—to be conformed to the image of His Son. Thus, this verse assures us that our salvation is part of God's intentional, loving plan to bring us into a deeper relationship with Christ and to reflect His character in our lives.

[35] Referring to Romans 9:16—"but of God that showeth mercy" (KJV). This verse reminds us that mercy is not something we can earn or demand, but it is an act of God's sovereign grace. Our salvation, and even our ability to respond to Him, is entirely dependent on God's mercy, which He freely offers, independent of our works or worthiness. This underscores the profound truth that God's mercy is the ultimate foundation of our hope and security in Him.

In this transformation, we are given a new heart, a new spirit,[36]and a new direction in life. What was once filled with the darkness of sin is now illuminated by the light of Christ. Our desires are reordered, our will is aligned with God's, and we are empowered by the Holy Spirit[37]to live in a way that reflects the character of Christ. We are no longer defined by our sin and depravity but by the righteousness of Christ that has been credited to us.

John Flavel beautifully captures this profound truth: "How transcendently glorious is the advancement of believers, by their union with the Lord of glory? This also is an admirable and astonishing mystery; it is the highest dignity of which our nature is capable, to be hypostatically united; and the greatest glory of which our persons are capable is to be mystically united to this Lord of glory; to be bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh."[38]

This is the ultimate work of redemption—the work that not only saves us from eternal separation from God but also

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[36] See also Ezekiel 36:26. This reference draws attention to God's promise of spiritual renewal and transformation, where He promises to give a new heart and spirit to His people. It complements the truth in Romans 9:16, emphasizing that mercy and transformation come solely from God, who sovereignly chooses to act in grace, making us new and enabling us to respond to His call.

[37] See Acts 1:8—"receiving power from the Holy Spirit." This passage highlights the essential role of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers for the mission of spreading the gospel. It emphasizes that the power to live and witness for Christ does not come from human effort but from the Holy Spirit, who equips believers to carry out God's work in the world.

[38] John Flavel, as cited in "Quotes on Union With Christ," Covenant Protestant Reformed Church, https://cprc.co.uk/quotes/quotes-on-union-with-christ/.

renews us in His image, making us more and more like Christ. It is a work that is ongoing, as we are continually being transformed into the likeness of God's Son throughout our lives. This transformation is not just an external change in behavior but a deep, internal renewal that affects every aspect of who we are. It is a miracle of God's grace, one that we could never accomplish on our own but one that He freely gives to all who believe in His Son.

The truths I have mentioned earlier—the depth of our depravity, the radical transformation offered through Christ, and the grace of God in redeeming humanity—should lead us to a profound understanding of both God's mercy and His justice. These truths are not abstract theological concepts; they are matters of eternal significance, with the power to deliver us from the righteous judgment of God. Without this divine intervention, our condition would be hopeless, as we are dead in our sins, deserving of the full penalty for our rebellion against God. As R.C. Sproul rightly said, "God is never obligated to be merciful. Mercy, by definition, is voluntary. God owes no one grace. If grace is owed, it is not grace. If God is required to be merciful, then it is not mercy. It is justice." This reminds us that grace is not something we can demand or expect—it is purely a gift of God's sovereign will.[39]But thanks be to God, there is hope—hope that comes only through Jesus Christ.[40]

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[39] R.C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1998), n.p.

[40] See 1 Peter 1:3— "He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (ESV). This verse affirms that our new birth and living hope are grounded not in human effort, but in the sovereign grace of God and the victorious resurrection of Christ—a hope that is alive, enduring, and future-oriented.

God's justice and mercy are two sides of the same coin, intricately woven together in the redemption story. It is crucial to understand that God's love, while being infinite and boundless, is not a love that ignores His justice. Too often, we fall into the trap of thinking of God's love in such a way that it overlooks His holiness and righteousness. But in reality, His love cannot exist apart from His justice. His justice demands that sin be dealt with,[41]that rebellion against His holy character be punished. Without His justice, there would be no need for mercy. The very reason mercy is so precious is because justice is so real, so holy, and so terrifying. As A.W. Pink explains, "Mercy is not a right to which man is entitled… It is the self-moved, spontaneous, and unmerited love of God which causes Him to be actively compassionate."[42]Mercy, then, does not cancel justice—it operates within its sphere.[43]God's justice demands that sin be punished, and His mercy steps in not to contradict that demand, but to satisfy it through Christ. Just I've said earlier, the cross becomes the meeting place of divine justice and mercy: justice served, mercy extended.

Conclusion: From Death to Life—All Because of Grace

As we gaze into the mirror of God's Word, we see a clear and sobering picture of our former condition: dead in sin, separated from God, and utterly incapable of saving

[41] Cf. Proverbs 17:15—"He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord." This verse highlights the moral gravity of unjust judgment—whether in excusing evil or condemning the righteous—underscoring God's absolute standard of justice.

[42] Arthur W. Pink, *The Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 81.

[43] Ibid., 82.

ourselves. From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture offers a unified verdict—mankind is deeply and totally depraved. We were not merely mistaken or misguided; we were spiritually lifeless, rotten at heart, and blind to the truth.

Yet in the midst of our hopelessness, a light broke through—the light of grace. God did not leave us in our darkness. In His rich mercy, He called us, raised us, and transformed us. This transformation is not the result of external reform or human effort but of a heart regenerated by the Spirit, shaped by grace, and redeemed through the blood of Christ.

The cross stands at the center of it all. There, the great exchange took place—the sinless Son of God was made sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. On the cross, our debt was canceled, our separation ended, and our new identity secured.

Now we bear a new name, a new identity, and a new life in Christ. The former slaves have become sons, the spiritually dead have been made alive, and former enemies have been reconciled to God.

All of this is by grace—grace that sets us free, grace that changes us, and grace that makes us holy. And our response? A heart overflowing with gratitude, a life centered on Christ, and a faith that bears the fruit of holiness.

This is not a story of our goodness. It is the story of a merciful God—of His plan, His power, and His love. Therefore, in all that we are and do, Christ must remain our center, our aim, and our life.

Soli Deo Gloria.

CHAPTER TWO

UNION WITH CHRIST: THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

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Just to recall who we were before grace found us—it is sobering, yet necessary. We once lived lives utterly controlled by the devil, walking according to the prince of the power of the air as Paul describes in Ephesians. Our hearts were not neutral; they were fully aligned with the patterns and desires of this fallen world.[44]As far as our filthiness is concerned, we were not merely stained—we were enslaved to sin.[45]

Back then, it didn't feel like a hard life. In fact, there were no real spiritual struggles. The world was our home, and its pleasures were our pursuit. We found comfort in its approval, and satisfaction in its promises. Godly things had no appeal; they were foreign, even offensive to our nature. Prayer seemed foolish, holiness seemed burdensome, and truth was negotiable. Our hearts were not lukewarm—they were burning with rebellion. Every desire, every thought, every plan was an abomination rooted in self-will and hostility toward God.[46]

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[44] The phrase "aligned with the pattern and desires of this fallen world" (Eph. 2:2) reflects the Greek term peripateō, denoting a habitual lifestyle or conduct. It describes the unregenerate life driven by worldly values, under the influence of Satan ("the prince of the power of the air"), and governed by the "passions of the flesh," which refers to sinful human desires opposed to God's will.

[45] See Romans 1:21—"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened." This verse highlights the willful rejection of God by those who knew Him. Though they had knowledge of God, they failed to honor or thank Him, leading to futile thinking and spiritual darkness.

[46] Deuteronomy 25:16 (ESV). This verse reminds us that God takes integrity seriously. Dishonesty is not merely a social fault but a moral offense that is detestable in His sights. As believers, we are called to reflect God's character in our dealing, choosing truth and fairness in every circumstance as an act of worship and obedience.

But then—grace. Grace that did not come as a reward for seeking, but as an invasion of divine mercy. In that moment of spiritual deadness, grace awakened us. It tore through the blindness, pierced through the hardness, and drew us—not just to religion or morality—but to Christ Himself. It gave us a new spirit, a new heart, and a new set of affections. What once thrilled us now repulses us. What once bored us now captivates us. Grace gave us eyes to see the worth of Christ and the emptiness of the world.

By this miracle of grace, we now cling to Christ—not out of obligation, but out of love and need. And with this new spirit,[47]we learn to say no to worldly things, not as mere legalists, but as those who have found something infinitely better. This is not our doing; it is the transforming work of God's grace, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Now, all the descriptions of human depravity presented in the previous section, as declared by the Scriptures, are undeniably true. They reveal the helpless, fallen, and utterly lost condition of mankind apart from God.[48]Humanity, enslaved by sin and blinded by spiritual ignorance, stands incapable of rescuing itself. No human effort, philosophy, or religious ritual can ever bridge the gap between sinful man

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[47] Ezekiel 11:19 (ESV)—"And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh." This verse echoes Ezekiel 36:26 and emphasizes God's sovereign work of spiritual renewal in His people—giving them unity of heart and a new spirit that desires to follow Him.

[48] John 3:19 (ESV)— "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil."